{ See Note at end. }

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A SERMON FOR THE NEW YEAR.

WHAT RELIGION MAY DO FOR A MAN.

BY THEODORE PARKER.

His Last Sermon, preached January 2, 1859. (See letter at end.)

LUKE, XIV, 10: Friend, go up higher.

It is New Year's Sunday to-day—when men become thoughtful, as they look back on the irretrievable past, or forward to the uncertain future. Let us use therefore the occasion of the day, and so this morning I ask your attention to some thoughts on WHAT RELIGION MAY DO FOR A MAN, A SERMON FOR NEW-YEAR'S SUNDAY.

In Religion there are always three things which make up that complex of consciousness. First, there are Feelings, the emotional part; second, Ideas, the intellectual part; and third, there are Actions, the practical part. These three, I take it, are the essentials of all conscious Religion, and you actually find them in all the different forms thereof which prevail, either amongst us or the rest of mankind.

But see what difference there may be in what is called Religion,—in respect to these various elements of this complex consciousness.

1. The IDEA may be that Man is a miserable wretch, totally depraved, no good thing in his body, his mind incapable of learning truth by its own power, his conscience good for nothing, and his affections "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." It may be that God is a snake, a crocodile, a bull, a white elephant, a consuming fire—Moloch, Zeus, Jupiter, Woden, Thor, Jehovah, a Hebrew peasant, or the ecclesiastical triune God who created the world for his own glory, and means to torment the majority of its inhabitants for ever, for his own good will and pleasure. So the Relation between man and God may be thought to be everduring wrath — Almighty hate on the one side, and the most helpless prostration on the other.

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2. The FEELING may be such as comes unavoidably from this idea of Man, God, and their Relation. It may be fear, waxing into sheer and utter despair and hopelessness of all good, both now and hereafter.

3. The ACTION may be such as comes from these emotions: It may be killing an only son, as a sacrifice to Jehovah—making the male children pass through fire unto Moloch, sacrificing a daughter unto Artemis, consecrating a monk to Jesus of Nazareth, or a nun to the "Virgin Mother of God." It may be a deed of Jews crucifying Jesus, or of Christians massacring the Jews by the million; it may be the act of Simeon the Stylite standing for six and forty years on a pillar-top in the market-place, or of an Indian devotee throwing himself before the car of his idol God; it may be that of the Catholic inquisitor tearing men to pieces with his Spanish or Italian Rack, or of the Protestant inquisitor burning Servetus at Geneva, or hanging a Quaker woman from the great Elm on Boston common.

All these Ideas, Feelings, Actions have prevailed, and have been called Religion, and that too amongst earnest and self-denying people.

On the other hand these three things may be entirely different.

1. The IDEA of Man may be that he is the crown of creation, with a noble nature, and a grand destination here on earth, and hereafter, we know not where, with powers proportioned to his destination and certain to develop themselves in such manner as to secure this ultimate welfare. The Idea of God may be that of Infinite Perfection — Power Almighty, Wisdom All-knowing, All-righteous Justice, and All-embracing Love.

The Idea of the Relation between the two may be that God is a perfect Creator and a perfect Providence, making all from Love—the highest possible motive, for infinite welfare—the highest possible purpose, and in the material and the human world furnishing the adequate means to go between his motive and his purpose and so secure the end.

2. The FEELING may be the natural one which springs up at the thought of such a God and the consciousness of such a nature in us, and the certainty of such a relation of the infinite Father and Mother to all mankind. It may be a feeling of reverence, of that perfect love which casts out every fear, of confidence in God's motive, purpose, means — all passing into a perfect and absolute trust in God, in his world here and all his worlds hereafter.

3. The ACTION may be the normal use of every limb of the body and every faculty of the spirit, obedience to the natural laws which God writes on the body and in the soul, a life of manly toil and thought and the natural enjoyment of all reasonable things—works of industry, of wisdom, justice, affection, philanthropy, all growing like a flower from this seed of piety within the soul.

All these conflicting and hostile Ideas, Feelings and Actions have prevailed as Religion. What a difference between the two! What I named first, I will call *False* Religion, for it comes from a mistaken and perverted action of the human powers. The other, let me call *True* Religion, for it comes from the normal and healthy action of the same powers. The odds between the two is the difference between lust and love — between the ghastliest sickness and the fairest and handsomest health.

Each Form of Religion is thought of infinite value by its devotee—the false and unnatural, not less than the fit and true. The Spanish Inquisitors, as an act of faith, tearing a woman to pieces with their rack, the half-frantic Christians in a prayer-meeting asking God to confound some humble minister, put a hook in his jaws, or else remove him from the world; all of these are as earnest and devoted as those noble women who show their love to God by justice and charity to needy men, and with blessed feet write out the Gospel of Love, in the hovels of the poor, in the pestilence of a camp, in the cell of the maniac and the criminal, or stooping down, on the ground write FREEDOM as a guide-board to the slave. But let not this identity of name make you and me for a

moment doubt the odds between such opposites.

A bigoted minister, superstitious, ignorant of God and Man and true Religion, spiteful, and yet devout, hanging a Quaker woman because she believes in the free inspiration of the human soul; a thoughtful wife, trusting in God, loving her children and their father, ruling her household with discretion, industry, religious love, and living kindly toward all mankind,—what an odds there is betwixt the two! Yet he values his religion as much as she.* So the filthiest Squaw who rots in her California subterranean den values her mode of life as highly as Von Humboldt the science that he learns and sends abroad to bless the world.

Against the false form of Religion I have spoken, perhaps, less then I should, but certainly, far more than I would, for I never think of it without a shudder at the ghastly horrors it has produced, and still sows the world withal.

All round me do I see its wicked work; for as the forehead of a groaning man is grimly wrinkled by the bitter draughts he swallows through mistake, whereat his palate quivers still, and his throat turns rough while the poison begins to work him fatal ill below—so with earnest and self-denying believers of those bitter doctrines which they too have swallowed also by mistake, do their sad looks, distorted mouth, belittled brow, their doleful voice and ghastly prayers, attest the unkindness of that religion which so wars against the soul. It is this odious thing which has been opposed, hated, and scorned by some of the most philosophical and humane men who ever lived. They spoke against that Religion whose Emotion is fear and despair before God, and hate before men; whose Ideas are that man is a worm, and God a great ugly boot, lifted up to tread him down with endless crush of misery; whose Actions are unmanly, unjust, and wicked, watering the earth with blood, and sowing it with seeds of woe. It is against these things that Grecian Epicurus, and Lucretius the Roman, his pupil, heathens both, with many more, waged a continual war; it is against false religion that many a man and woman since have lifted up their voices, and won a bad name in the Christian Church, and come to a bloody end from Christian hands. But do you ever find a philosopher who speaks against the other form of Religion,—against Infinite Perfection in God,—against emotions which are trust and love and charity,—against actions which are honor, wisdom, justice, mercy, loving-kindness towards men? Yes, I know you do find, here and there, such as speak against all this, but it is those who have been first corrupted by that False Religion, which consists in the opposite of those good things. What natural man ever prefers sickness to health, sickness, and its miserable weakness, to strong and handsome health? We send a sectarian form of Religion to heathens, and they laugh it to scorn. Half a million bibles have been published in Siam, and scattered amongst the heathens there, and there are not three dozen Christians in all Siam! They took the bibles,—they rejected the doctrines which the Missionaries taught. But did you ever hear of a nation of heathen men rejecting Justice, Integrity, Charity, and saying: "We will have no such things amongst us! kill every just man! let us burn with slow fire every man who loves his kind!" No, you never heard that; savage human nature does no such thing.

Now see what the True Religious Emotions and Ideas can do for men.

I. In our early life we find developing in us certain great, strong, instinctive appetites, those which tend to support the individual frame,—both those which ally us with others, and those wrathful passions whose functions it is to defend us from other men. All these are good in themselves, each indispensable to human welfare, for the life of the individual, and the life of the race. But we see how easily they all run to excess; before we know our danger we are often thereby driven down to our ruin.

Every man must fight a battle between the reflective personal will and the instinctive animal appetites. Most men bear

the scars of this conflict all their days, and grim recollections of the struggles which in their hearts went on unseen. What a story many an honest man and woman I now look upon, might tell of this conflict! Here and there the animal appetite conquers, and the man never walks afterwards upright and free, but goes bowed as a slave all his life. The thoughtful old man looks on the lads in a college, on the boys and girls in a great school, and bethinking himself of his own internal life, and the struggles within him—desire drawing one way, and conscience pointing another—a little tear springs into his manly and experienced eye, half hope and half fear. I knew a woman once, rather a cold and worldly one, but strong-minded and experienced well, and tender-hearted still, who never heard the little boys pattering around their cradle, but she sighed inwardly at the thought of the rough ways those little feet must tread before they rested in calm, victorious, and virtuous manhood.

Now, if a youth or maiden be trained up to know there is an infinitely perfect God, who made man of the best possible material, in the best possible way, for the best possible purpose—a God who plans all for the good of each, and placed in us that spark of his spirit which we call conscience;—if they were trained up to trust this infinite God—to feel love and reverence for him, and a most sacred desire to keep every command he writes in their consciousness; if they were thoroughly taught that the true service of Him is to listen to that still small voice of conscience and obey its sure and gentle word—why, what a safeguard this would be! If they were taught that the laws of God, with beneficent function, worked as irresistibly as gravitation, that no deed, no thought, no automatic instinct, ever escapes their righteous jurisdiction—then what a motive would the young people have to live a clean, pure life, free from the immoral violence and heats of passion, which destroy the welfare of so many men!

There is a paradise of joy whereto all youths and maidens have a birthright of entrance Through the automatic instincts, Nature calls, "Come up hither, oh young man, oh young maid! Come up hither, and be blessed!" But there is only one gate which opens and lets in, and that is the Gate of Duty; thereto through the wilderness of life there is only one Guide, and that is *Conscience*—the true Emanuel, or God-with-us.

I see how strong are these various appetites, what excesses they lead to, what ruin they often end in. Look at the drunkard, the glutton, the debauchee—men who are slaves to the baser part of their appetites, and yet do not get the manly delight which even those parts of us were meant to afford.

But in forming man, God provided us with a power to rule all these passions, and make every appetite not only secure its own special satisfaction, but serve likewise the general welfare of the whole, and promote the development of the highest faculties of the spirit. Man's body and his soul are a unit, and there is not a passion in the body but the soul needs it all, and needs its normal satisfaction.

To this end, to harmonize those appetites and passions, I know no help like true Ideas of Religion and the natural Emotions thereof; they lead unavoidably to noble actions.

How we misjudge the value of common things! "What a fortunate young man is Augustus," said the men and women of Boston many years ago, "he inherits so much money,—and of course so much social respectability, which is the function of money!—born in one of the first families,"—that is, the richest,—"and inheriting such an estate; what a fortunate man!" "I wish *I* had his lot," said the young men; "I wish I could give such a fortune to *my* children," said the old ones. Ah me! the fortunate man is he who starts in life with the true religious Ideas of Man, of God, of His providential care for you and me, and all mankind; with the true religious Feelings of reverence, gratitude, trust, love, and the unconquerable Will to keep his every command. The culture which brings about this is not always costly, it must be precious, and that forever.

II. But the great battle of life is not over when we have put down wrath, lust, and drunkenness, and have got through the wild land of the appetites. There are vices of conscious reflection not less than of instinctive passion. In New England I fear these are the greatest dangers, for few men warn you against them. Nay, what in a commercial and political town is called a great success in life is commonly the greatest defeat of the manliest thing which is in you.

The subtler vices are love of approbation, often degenerating into mere vanity, which is to honor what the froth is to the sea,—the scum it genders in chafing with the world; ambition, the excessive love of power; covetousness, the intemperate love of money: these often make a dreadful ruin of a man. How many wealthy wrecks do I see, floating all the week in the streets, and drifted, perhaps, for an hour into some meeting-house of a Sunday. A man may be a millionaire in dollars, and yet a bankrupt in manhood.

Bears and frogs, and various other creatures hybernate a part of every year; they lie still, seemingly unconscious; their powers all live, but the functions are suspended; nothing is wholly dead, all is sleeping. How many men do I know, who undergo a partial hybernation, and that for long years! Their conscience has "denned up," as the bears in winter, their humanities are all torpid as the frogs who now lie buried in the mud. Yet these men walk about, all their higher faculties winter-quartered in their heart. Men salute them, "Good morning, sir; a Happy New Year!" They sit on platforms and are called by honorable names. Ministers preach to those hybernal souls as vainly as to a winter congregation of Russian bears. Nay, worse; hybernant ministers hold forth to a hybernating pack of "worshippers." So, in the catacombs of Egypt, you shall find the ancient priest amid his ancient congregation, mummies all.

A few years ago, in Boston, an ambitious religious society built a meeting-house more costly than they could pay for, or keep; so they were forced to leave it; the steeple turned the church out of doors. I never knew but one instance of this kind. Societies are wiser. But how often do I find that some respectable vice —covetousness, vanity, or ambition, has turned the Man out of his own body. Politics have twisted that man's neck; fine dress exposes the shame of this civilized Adam and Eve, so fearfully clothed, that they are not ashamed while they yet forever seek to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God, always walking in every garden, at the cool or the heat of day, with eyes that travel through eternity. Here the shop unhouses the man; this is crushed by an avalanche of domestic goods; and this has bottled his soul along with his drink; there the pulpit, with its snow-white halter, chokes the life out of the minister. Zeal for a false religion has slowly changed Dr. Banbaby into a practical atheist, all the theological funeral bells are tolling the knell over his humanity, while they mean to ring a joyous peal for his accession of divinity.

Miss Seemly had a lithe, trim figure, white teeth and rosy cheeks, eyes that if seldom brilliant were always sharp; a slender fortune and a stain on her family. At marriage she became Mrs. Seemly Worldly; wedlock only added to her name; it did not change her character, which, in joy and sorrow, she has fiercely developed ever since. With a temper which, if not sweet, was at least a pleasant sour, in youth she committed no sin of instinctive passion, neither of attractive love, nor of repulsive wrath; she was too decorous, nay, perhaps too conscientious for either. The marriage was a bargain,—the Worldlys were a "great family," distant relations of the Seemlys, too. Mrs. Seemly-Worldly, for still she keeps her maiden name, thought wealth was worth far more than love. She was devoted to her husband; for the lowlier purposes of life she was a convenient mate. She chose her religion, as her marriage bonnet, for its conventional fitness to the hour,—neither held an unfashionable feather; it was the religion of worldliness. Now, she aims at two chief things, to make a fashionable and ecclesiastic show, so demure at

prayers, so jaunty at a ball; and to transplant her daughters into soft, rich soil. Oh Mary Magdelen, and all ye other scriptural Marys, is there a patron saint for the abandoned women only of the street? is the only prostitution theirs? The Seemly-Worldlys are older than Jerusalem, and in the midst of such it were no wonder, if to a woman taken in adultery, clear-sighted Jesus really said, "Neither do I condemn *thee*. But go thou and sin no more." And to the Seemly-Worldlys of his time, how bravely did he say, "The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you!"

An old story tells that Actæon, a famous hunter, kept many hounds, and they ended by eating him up. Actæon is an old name; it is Greek besides. How many Actæons do you and I know—men eat up by their own dogs! I know men who damage their body by their business; so do you. The other Sunday I spoke of them—a sermon meant likewise partly for myself; I hope we shall all heed it. Many more I know, who break down their conscience, their affections, their higher manhood. Mechanics sicken of their craft; painters have the lead-colic; tailors and shoemakers are pale and dyspeptic-looking; printers go off in consumption, which they have caught from breathing ink and type-metal. Is that the worst? I know men whose ambition, whose vanity, whose covetousness, has wrought them worse mischief—a consumption of the mind, a numb-palsy of the affections, gout in the conscience, a general dyspepsia of their humanities.

When Mr. Successful first came to Boston, "with nothing but his hands," he was a sufficiently generous young man. When he began his housekeeping, a little string of money, only one hundred and fifty dollars long, went clean round his annual expenses; the ends met and tied, and he had still a penny for the poor. When he was comfortably rich, his heart was still human and needed small prompting for kind deeds. He lit the fire on a poor widow's hearth, and the blessing of such as were ready to perish came, the sweetest benediction on his modest daily meal, or the annual sumptuous feast of Thanksgiving, when his grateful eye fell on the unbroken ring of domestic jewels gradually twined by his own and his fond partner's hands. Now Mr. Successful is very rich, awfully rich, wealthy beyond hope; he talks in a "high prosperous voice" at the Bank; in the council of hard faces you turn off from his; Law is his only conscience now. It would take his right hand a great while to find any alms which his left hand ever does. So great is the load of gold on his shoulders, he cannot lift either hand to his lowliest pocket; once charity was wont to come, he heard her gentle tapping at his wooden door; now all day she shall vainly beat against his gate of gold, and he will not hear that dear angel of humanity. His ears are full of money, he hears but one sound, chink, chink, chink. Theology tells us of stony hearts; they may be broken and managed then. But God save us from a heart of gold, which only beats like the mint-hammer to make coin, and circulates nothing but money, sending it out arterial, and taking it back dark-colored and venous. In Bunyan's wonderful poem, as the Pilgrim draws nigh the end, his burden lightens, and at length falls off, leaving him to walk upright and joyous, a free man. But Mr. Successful has a huge, deep, wide-mouthed pannier fastened to his back, and as he trudges through this storm of money, it so rains gold thereinto that his burden greatens continually, and with bended back, and out-pressed eyes, knock-kneed, he staggers on his way, ere long to fall beneath his load, dead and buried beneath his pannier of gold. On his gravestone let it be writ, HE COINED HIS HEART, AND TURNED HIS CONSCIENCE INTO DOLLARS; HIS HUMAN SYMPATHIES BECAME EAGLES.

You sigh over the human ruins cast ashore on infamous places, stranded in jails, or caught upon the gallows, and so exposed to public shame; kind souls take interest in their cruel fate, however so well deserved; "there breaks not a heart but leaves some one to grieve." Beneficent lawyers sometimes try to defend

these poor creatures, and save them from their fate, and gentle-hearted ministers would intercede. Nay, the State has forecasting care for such as are like to be whelmed under in that perilous sea of crime; builds her breakwaters, and artificial harbors, calling them "Reform School," "Industrial School," and other Christian names. But men are ruined otherwise; how many an ambitious craft encounters total wreck while sailing for the Presidency, for the Governor's chair, or some political port far less renowned? The shore of Congress is lined with the fragments of shipwrecked men, wherewith, also, the coast of every State is painfully deformed. What argosies yearly go under, all their virtuous wealth spilled out among the heedless waves.

The saddest human ruin now conspicuous in America is no wretch in the State prison, no lunatic at Worcester or Taunton; he will never be hung on any gibbet. It is a man uncommonly well gifted, well educated, too; his praise is in all the newspapers. Pah! let us not look at him again; it is New-Year's Sunday, turn we to more pleasant things.

Terrible are these vices of reflective calculation. I know of nothing which so enables a man to correct them, and to keep his hounds to hunt for him, not eat him up, as true religious Ideas, true religious Feelings. These put you in harmony with the universe around you, and with God who is everywhere. They set your little mill where the stream of life falls on its wheels, and the great forces of the Universe come and grind for you all day, all night, year out, year in. If you want to heap up more money than you can ever earn, or either wisely spend, or manfully can keep, I would advise you to renounce True Religion; give it all up, and go into business with your whole soul—nay, with your whole body and mind. Aaron's calf of gold will serve your turn better than Moses' God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, immensely better than the Universe's God of Infinite Perfection. If you wish to be very popular with very popular men, or with cold, hard, cruel persons, who often control society for their special use, I would advise you to make yourself into a practical atheist, ringing with loud professions of ecclesiastical Religion, noisy as brass, but like brass destitute of all love for the Infinite God of the world, and all charity towards men; that is the card for such a game. But if you wish to be a Man, or a Woman, and enjoy all your human rights, welfares, hopes, joys, and those dear, heartfelt delights, which are to happiness what well-earned daily bread, and nightly sleep, are to health; why, I would advise you before all things, to heed that "still, small voice," which spoke once, at least, in the heart of the worst of us, and still comes to mankind, gently pleading, "Friend, come up higher; come up higher, friend!" I would advise you to seek that Religion whose Ideas are of the Infinite Perfection of God, whose Feelings are Reverence and Trust and Love, and whose Actions are the Natural Morality of this body and this soul.

There are Times of Temptation. They come to us all, the passionate earlier, the ambitious later; sometimes both together. Alas, me! which way shall I turn? Here is an internal guide which God has given to watch over me, and keep me, and bear me up in his hands, lest at any time I dash my foot against this twofold stone of stumbling and rock of offence. Has not every man felt the temptation? Who has not sometimes likewise yielded when desire from within leagued with occasion from without, and both were too much for us? And, while plucking the forbidden fruit, have we all not been stung by that bee of remorse which mercifully lurks therein? Some have eaten the forbidden fruit so long that remorse troubles them no longer with pain; they are so paralyzed they know no more the sweet delights of life which virtuous lips alone can taste. In these times, the true Idea of Religion comes back to men, the infinitely perfect God, man so noble in nature, conscience so true, will so strong, human destination so fair and wonderful—and deep religious Emotions spring up again, reverence for God and his unchanging law of right. Then we say to the tempter, "Get thee

behind me!—who am I to debase my nature and sully my soul?" Many a noble youth has thus tottered on the sharp and perilous edge of ruin till True Religion flashed her early light upon his road, and he turned and crept back safely. Many a noble man has been worse tempted, and by the same guide has been led through a wilderness hotter than the Arabian.

The stain of vice is on us; we have yielded to the temptation; we have broken with conscience, and marred the integrity of our own soul. Then, too, the True Religion comes to us with marvellous healing power. There is hope: for the God all mighty and all righteous, is all-loving, too; and he has provided me ways of return. In the sickliest frame there is always a recuperative struggle, an effort to expel the disease and return to the normal type. But the body is mortal, meant to last only a few score years: so its power of recovery has limits never far off; a fever soon burns down this six-foot tenement; a drowning child pulls a stout man after it into the fatal stream—the dead baby-hand strangling a vehement and full-grown life; a short fall breaks our precious urn—'t was only earthenware—and men gather up the fragments to bury them out of their sight, while its precious balm ascends to heaven, filling the neighborhood with its sweetness. But there is no spiritual death—only a partial numbness, never a stop to that higher life. The soul's power of recovery from wickedness is infinite: its time of healing is time without bounds. There is no limit to the *vis medicatrix* of the inner, the immortal man. To the body death is a finality; but the worst complication of personal wickedness is only one incident in the development of a man whose life is continuous, an infinite series of incidents all planned and watched over by Absolute Love. "One day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," is what Jesus might say to each penitent thief:—aye, to the red-handed remorseful murderer gnawing his own heart; yes! to the New England kidnapper, not yet gnawing his own heart, still prowling about the courts, licking his jaws and hungering for other prey. The Providence of God is infinite, and his love embraces the wickedest of men, not less than the best. In the world of matter and of man, He has provided an infinite means to arouse the self-restoring energy of the sin-sick soul—painful means no doubt they may be to us, but blessed in their motive, and oh! how joyous in their end! I think there is not in the Old Testament, or the New, a single word which tells this blessed truth that penitence hereafter shall do any good, or that the agony which men shall suffer never so many years shall wipe out one single scar of wickedness. But the Universe is the revelation of God, and it tells you a grander truth,—infinite Power and infinite Love, time without bounds for the restoration of the fallen and the recovery of the wicked. In all the family of God, there is never a Son of perdition.

This True Religion is to be preached also in jails, and the hands of the murderer will then be lifted up in penitence and aspiration when he finds that there is an Infinite Mother who looks even upon him, and through the blood upon his soul beholds the heavenly child and loves him still.

There are also Times of Prosperity. The little olive-plants are green with prophecy. Not a pearl has fallen from our chain of affection twined by loving hands about the neck; our cup runneth over. Then the man of true religious ideas and emotions feels his brotherhood to all mankind. "Who am I," quoth he, "but one of God's children? Did he make me stronger than they? Then the powers that he has given, and the fruits of my gatherings thereby, are they only for myself? Are they not also for other men? Should I not help men more, as I am abler than they? Am I only a hand to gather for myself, and keep? only a mouth to consume in selfish greed? Am I not also much rather a hand to uphold the honest man who yet is weak, and goes tottering; to distribute my power to those, who though earnest and honest, yet need? Am I not a mouth to instruct and warn; to heal and soothe and bless?" There can be Catholics who are mean and

selfish in the use of all their faculties; such men may be Protestants just as well — Trinitarians, Unitarians, Methodists, Baptists, nay, Christians after the fashion of the Christian church; believing all the creed blameless, and hoping "salvation through Christ" from "the wrath of the dreadful God." But such men cannot have the True Religion. He who has its Ideas and Emotions, perforce must have its Actions; for every tree bears fruit after its own kind, not another's kind.

What joy does this Religion add to prosperity! Who, think you, is richest in welfare—the miser, that gripes his four million dollars with lean, tenacious hand, which only opens at the touch of death, to litter his money on the ground, where he goes dust to dust; or that wise, kind man, who is contented with enough, and with his mercy cheers the cold fireside of some lone woman, where virtue and poverty sit down continually on her hearth? I do not underrate riches. I think I am one of the few New England ministers who duly honor wealth, who preach the natural gospel of industry, of comfort, of enjoyment, of riches also when fairly gained. But I would rather have the Warren Street Chapel in my heart, and shining out of my face, than all the hoarded money of the Rothschilds in my hand.

How we misjudge of values; if some inspired Diogenes should light his lamp and seek the richest man in Boston, he might find him possessed of a great estate; he might find him with a very little one, so small that the assessors never found it out, nor levied a property-tax upon him. How we misrate things! The material wealth is outward, and the spiritual is inward. Happy the man who has the spiritual; blessed also, if he have likewise the material, wherewith to lengthen his arm, and spread good thereby!

There are likewise Times of Sorrow. The world's tide is against us; riches vanish; some commercial crisis sweeps off a competence; we are too old for new hope; the faces of our dear ones have changed, and they are sent away. How handsome was the urn of love that held our jewels! Now it is broken; the diamonds and rubies are all trodden into dust; fragments only litter the floor of life. How full of heart-breaks is our earthly day! It is seldom difficult to die for ourselves but to leave those who make life worth the living, to feel the treasures of our affection slip through our hand so eager and yet so impotent, this is the bitterness of death. Silent the young wife sits by her husband's side,—it is the better part of her which is soon to be shorn away; the memory of youthful courtship comes back, hopeful and fragrant as a morning in May, when the apple-trees have also put their nuptial glory on: she brings again the bridal's throbbing joy, and recollects the scattered bliss of all the following years. She looks on that forehead, once so fair and full and smooth, the throne of many a kiss, but roughened now, ploughed over and harrowed, too, with various pain. Their two right hands are clasped in private now, as once, when both were conscious, they were publicly made one; but his drops from her, it is only the wife's palm that warmed the husband's hand. She is made a widow while the joy of her bridal and the scattered bliss of all the following years became new consecrate to her.

In hours like this what shall sustain our heart? Only the certainty that there is an Infinite Power, all wise, all good, that loves us, loves them, and if He change their countenance, it is only from the mortal into the immortal glory, brightening and brightening forever. If this certainty does not wipe every tear from the eye of youth or age, it yet turns it into a telescopic glass wherewith they see the expanded souls of their dear ones. Therein the mother beholds the baby whom death painfully delivered of the flesh, now become a child in heaven, already blessed with power and virtue which quite surpass its living parents here. There the widowed heart of man or woman beholds the dearest transfigured into human glory, which mortal flesh could never put on, nor even wear upon the earth.

"Who would have thought my shrivelled heart
Could have received greenness? It was gone
Quite under ground, as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they are blown—
Where they together,
All the hard weather,
Hid from the world, keep house unknown."

This Religion at all times of life, I think is the chief treasure of human achievement. But if it be wise in such matters to speak of what a man has not inly experienced, and so known by heart, then I should say I think True Religion is not quite whole and mature in childhood, youth, or manhood; that it takes old age to make it complete in all its parts, and perfect in each detail. Childhood has its bud, growing from the germ which none notice in babyhood; youth has its flowers,—how fair and sweet a thing it is; in manhood comes the full foliage, and the expanding fruit falling, apple by apple, as it gets ripe; but in old age, only, appears I think the full harvest, when the very leaves turn into beauty ere they die, and the full ripe apples hang handsome on the tree, or, falling, clothe the ground with their sweet loveliness, each one a fruit historic, pointing back, also a seed prophetic of another Spring whose sun rises not on us here; we have its dawning, not its day.

Yesterday we took each other by the hand, and welcome smiled in mutual eyes as we gave each other good wishes. Children rose early, their limbs half-clad, and ran with pattering feet to their father's and mother's door, or to a more venerable generation, and lisped out their "Happy New Year!" To grave and thoughtful men what does it mean? The cause of greatest and perennial happiness is the true religious Ideas, right religious Feelings, manly religious Deeds. What better thing would you? what greater could you? Let us wish this, each to himself, all to our brother men.

The old year ended a day and a half ago. The Infinite Providence bends over the cradle, or the play-ground, or the school-room, or the workshop of her children, and wishes us all a Happy New Year. But the wise Mother leaves us somewhat to ourselves, to work our weal or woe, and though she holds the tether, and never lets us stray beyond recall, she holds it something loose, and lets us run and choose our way. Which will you,—the meaner or the nobler life? You may have the worst thing, or the best thing, and call either your "Religion!" Over your head and my head there hovers the Ideal Self that we know we ought to be. It points to years happier than we yet have known, and calls with cheery voice, —"Friend, come up higher! Come up higher, friend!" Let you and me not be disobedient unto that heavenly vision.

FAREWELL LETTER,

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN BOSTON.

MUCH VALUED FRIENDS:—

When I first found myself unable to speak to you again, and medical men bade me be silent, and flee off for my life to a more genial clime, I determined, before I went, to make ready and publish my New Year's Sermon, the last I ever preached; and the one which was to follow it, the last I ever wrote, lying there yet unspoken; and also to prepare a letter to you, reviewing our past intercourse of now nearly fifteen years.

The phonographer's swift pen made the first work easy, and the last sermon lies printed before you: the next I soon laid aside, reserving my forces for the last. But alas! the Thought, and still more the Emotion, requisite for such a Letter, under such circumstances, are quite too much for me now. So, with much regret, I find myself compelled by necessity to forego the attempt;—nay, rather, I trust, only to *postpone* it for a few weeks.

Now I can but write this note in parting, to thank you for the patience with which you have heard me so long; for the open-handed generosity which has provided for my unexpected needs; for the continued affection which so many of you have always shown me, and now more tenderly than ever; and yet above all for the joy it has given me to see the great Ideas and Emotions of True Religion spring up in your fields with such signs of promise. If my labors were to end to-day, I should still say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," for I think few men have seen larger results follow such labors, and so brief. But I shall not think our connection is

ended, or likely soon to be: I hope yet to look in your eyes again, and speak to your hearts. So far as my recovery depends on me, be assured, dear friends, I shall leave nothing undone to effect it; and so far as it is beyond human control, certainly you and I can trust the Infinite Parent of us all, without whose beneficent Providence not even a sparrow falls to the ground; living here or in Heaven, we are all equally the children of that unbounded Love. It has given me great pain that I could not be with such of you as have lately suffered bereavements and other afflictions, and at least speak words of endearment and sympathy, when words of consolation would not suffice.

I know not how long we shall be separated, but, while thankful for our past relations, I shall still fervently pray for your welfare and progress in True Religion, both as a Society, and as individual men and women. I know you will still think only too kindly of

Your Minister and Friend,

THEODORE PARKER.

EXETER PLACE, 27th January, 1859.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.

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